

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
AID-05 /073 W  
-----126052 021118Z /14  
R 301729Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7768  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 04719

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PN  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION POLITICS -- THE STATE OF PLAY

REF: PANAMA 4287

1. THE FORMATION OF A UNIFIED OPPOSITION -- A  
"NATIONAL UNION OF THE OPPOSITION" -- IN PANAMA HAS  
SO FAR PROVEN SOMEWHAT ELUSIVE. THE IDEA APPARENTLY  
APPEALS TO ALL THE ANTI-TORRIJOS, ANTI-GOVERNMENT  
PARTIES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY.  
A COORDINATING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED AMONG THE  
PARTIES TO PLAN A CAMPAIGN AIMED AT ACHIEVING DEMOCRATIC  
REFORMS, BUT THE LIBERAL PARTY HAS NOT YET BEEN  
REPRESENTED ON THE COMMITTEE.

2. THE PROBLEM CENTERS AROUND THE PERSON OF  
ARNULFO ARIAS, PRESIDENT OF THE LARGE PANAMENISTA  
PARTY AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF PANAMA. DAVID SAMUDIO,  
PRESIDENT OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, REPORTEDLY HAS  
A PERSONAL AS WELL AS A POLITICAL AVERSION TO ARIAS.  
ALTHOUGH THERE IS A STRONG FACTION WITHIN THE  
LIBERAL PARTY THAT FAVORS COOPERATING WITH ARIAS  
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AND THE OTHER PARTIES, SAMUDIO HAS SO FAR MANAGED  
TO KEEP THE LIBERALS AT A DISTANCE. HE HAS DONE  
SO, WE BELIEVE, FOR TWO BASIC REASONS: 1) HE HOPES  
THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY, WHICH (ALONE AMONG THE OPPOSITION  
PARTIES) SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT ON THE CANAL TREATIES,  
WILL BE ABLE TO BARGAIN SOME KIND OF DEMOCRATIC  
REFORMS OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT; AND 2) HE FEARS THAT

NO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT WILL  
BE POSSIBLE IF ARIAS FIGURES IN THE EQUATION.

3. SAMUDIO AND ARIAS HAVE MET TO DISCUSS THE IDEA  
OF UNITING, BUT HAVE NOT GOTTEN MUCH FARTHER THAN  
AGREEING TO A PRINCIPLE WHICH WOULD BE BASIC TO  
SUCH A UNION, THAT OF CONSTANT STRUGGLE FOR A RETURN  
TO DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION,  
AND THE FULL EXERCISE OF HUMAN FREEDOM. BOTH HAVE,  
SUPPOSEDLY, RENOUNCED ANY IMMEDIATE PERSONAL  
POLITICAL AMBITIONS.

4. THE SITUATION IS STILL VERY MUCH IN A STATE OF  
FLUX. THE PRESS CONFERENCE (REPORTED REFTTEL)  
WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN HELD BY ARIAS AND SAMUDIO  
NEVER MATERIALIZED, NOR DID A JOINT DECLARATION BY THEM  
WHICH ALSO HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED. THE GOVERNMENT,  
MEANWHILE, IS BUSY SENDING OUT ANTI-ARIAS SIGNALS  
AND, AT THE SAME TIME, CONTINUES TO TALK ABOUT MINOR  
REFORMS OF THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE -- PARTICULARLY,  
INCREASED LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IT WOULD SEEM THAT ALL SIDES ARE  
STILL JOCKEYING FOR POSITION, TRYING TO DETERMINE  
JUST WHAT EACH WANTS AND WHERE ACCOMMODATIONS CAN  
BE MADE. JORDEN

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**TAGS:** PINT, PN, STATE  
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